

evangelical truth and intentions. In the books of these several but kindred classes you are mortified to see how low religious thought and expression *can* sink ; and you almost wonder how it was possible for the noblest ideas that are known to the sublimest intelligences, the ideas of God, of Providence, of redemption, of eternity, to shine on a serious human mind without imparting some small occasional degree of dignity to the strain of thought. The indulgent feelings, which you entertain for the intellectual and literary deficiency of humble Christians in their religious communications in private, are with difficulty extended to those who make for their thoughts this demand on public attention: it was necessary for them to be Christians, but what made it their duty to become authors ? Many of the books are indeed successively ceasing, with the progress of time, to be read or known ; but the new supply continually brought forth is so numerous, that a person who turns his attention to religious reading is certain to meet a variety of them. Now only suppose a man who has been conversant and enchanted with the works of eloquence, glowing poetry, finished elegance, or strong reasoning, to meet a number of these books in the outset of his more serious inquiries ; in what light would the religion of Christ appear to him, if he did not find some happier illustrations of it ?

There is another large class of Christian books, which bear the marks of learning, correctness, and an orderly understanding ; and by a general propriety leave but little to be censured ; but which display no invention, no prominence of thought, or living vigour of expression ; all is flat and dry as a plain of sand. It is perhaps the thousandth iteration of common-places, the listless attention to which is hardly an action of the mind; you seem to understand it all, and mechanically assent while you are thinking of something else. Though the author has a rich immeasurable field of possible varieties of reflection and illustration around him, he seems doomed to tread over again the narrow space of ground long since trodden to dust, and in all his movements appears clothed in sheets of lead.

There is a smaller class that might be called mock eloquent writers. These saw the effect of brilliant expression in those works of eloquence and poetry where it was dictated and animated by energy of thought; and very reasonably